

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 7b – Friday morning discussion**

Question: I've been having an excruciating few days and mainly feeling everything is very dense, inside and outside. There's not a lot of thinking, just a lot of feelings of density. I'm starting to feel really discouraged by that because even though I'm really applying myself, it's just staying incredibly dense. And now I have this sensation of a lot of weight pushing down on me. Normally I have this pressure going most of the time in my head but I have this very intense feeling of weight pushing down, particularly on my back and shoulders. So – help! ☺

Linda: The thing is you've got to keep going without expecting anything. And although ultimately that density will lighten, you have to go into it without the expectation that it will. It's like you're not doing something to get something.

It can feel like you're doing something wrong because it's not how you want to feel. It's very difficult to sit with that. You're just going through a layer of very solid resistance, and it is a result of what you're doing, which can be disconcerting because you go, "I've been doing all this work and this resistance is here, and it shouldn't be here." But the thing is, you are going to go through deep levels of resistance that you haven't met before.

All you can do is sit with it and do your best not to want it to go. But know you're doing the right thing. That's all I can say; I can't really make it easier for you, I can't make it go away. I can say once this is over it probably will lift, but until then you have to be prepared to keep sitting through it. Just keep sitting with it, rather than try to push it away each time you see this non-acceptance of it, which is very difficult with resistance.

The thing is, the resistance is there for a reason as well. It's regulating the amount of energy that is coming through. And sometimes it needs to be just like that, for a number of reasons: to regulate the energy, to test you, to see how much you want this, to see if it can put you off and stop you. So see it as resistance. See it as something that needs to be there, even though it feels horrible. And you are going to feel disheartened by it, but don't try and push through it because that will just make it subtly stronger. So try and just be here. Do your practice. That's all you can do. It's difficult when it's like that, it's really difficult.

Question: I felt quite overwhelmed.

Linda: Well, let yourself be overwhelmed. Let yourself be emotional about it because that's what it's going to do. It's deep emotional past going through, just solid blocks of it. But the thing is not to try and break it up. Just sit with it. If you try and push against it, it's like pushing against a brick wall. You're just going to use all your energy doing that, and be tired, and it's going to totally overwhelm you. So be careful not to push. Just try and tread water, sit here – but make sure you keep sitting. I'd say do half an hour and do the walking. Really do the walking diligently and energetically, really feel your feet on the floor, come back and sit again.

Question: Yes, I know I need to walk. I think it all started when I sat right through and I just don't feel right. I need that walking, grounding.

Linda: Well, for the rest of the retreat sit for the half an hour, get up, do the walking, sit again. It won't feel right but it needs to be there. And it is a result of you sitting through. It's ultimately a good thing because it's come up. But it's very, very difficult to deal with and just sit without trying to change it, without wanting it to go away, without, "I've got to get out of this. I'm not doing the right thing," – you are. So just keep going, but break it up, really break it up. And when you're sitting for that half hour, really sit. Put everything into it without pushing: breathe, count, whatever you can to get through it.

Question: Yes. Thanks.

Linda: I can't give you a magic pill.

Question: There's also quite an absence of thinking. There's not even the distraction of a good wad of thinking. It's a very physical feeling, and that's what I thought – "This is resistance."

Linda: Yes, it's very deep, solid resistance from probably a long, long time ago. But you're feeling it now. So now is the time to face it, not in the future, which doesn't exist anyway. Do it now, and once you're through this resistance there will be a lightness and clarity. Then if it does happen again to this degree, you'll know what to do with it.

Question: This is really on behalf of a friend who – we are very close spiritual companions really – who finds it very hard to sit and meditate but likes doing the walking meditation. What's your view on walking meditation as a major practice?

Linda: Walking meditation is more a compliment to this. So you need to spend some periods sitting like this.

Question: He's been on retreats where they walk for four hours a day like this; solid, long walks and things like that. He found that very beneficial but I wonder if there's...

Linda: Well in some traditions... I've done retreats where they do an hour walking, an hour sitting. I've found this more beneficial and I still do. I find the walking great, but for shorter periods. He might be doing the Burmese Satipatthana.

Question: It could be but it was in Thailand.

Linda: They do do walking at times, the monks do. But I wouldn't recommend it as a total practice. It can become an avoidance of sitting. So I feel you need to sit.

Question: I came to this retreat with a sense or expectation that I would learn something or be touched in some ways about ego – that seemed to be something in my life. It didn't work out quite like that, although I've seen plenty of ego on my part. I was struck very heavily from the beginning by your insistence on being in the body. I've of course heard you teach that, and I've listened, but I listened hard this time and I somehow knew that there was something more I needed to penetrate

to, to understand about what it is for me. So I did everything: sat with it, reflected at other times about it, and gradually something seemed to emerge for me that's been quite delightful in totality. In part of my reflection time I found myself looking back on my young life, early twenties, where I was very fit and active and competitive and I remembered myself, driving myself to the last hundred meters of a competitive run, through the pain and the effort and coming upon the techniques of sort of retreating into the corner of my mind and willing my legs to continue, trying to remove myself from the pain and willing to continue. That had an effect and I experienced in those years, always at the end of such efforts, great peace. I had it explained by others as endorphins and that kind of thing, and no doubt that played a part. But I experienced peace out of that kind of effort.

Decades later, when I began to be introduced to the practice of meditation, I looked back on that and recognised at one stage that I had been engaged in a form of meditative practice without understanding what I was really doing. I was getting out of my thoughts, out of my mind. And through the years of middle life there were a lot of stresses and strains and I struggled with depression and fear. But I found that I kept up the running and that got me out of my head. But my conscious meditative practice began to grow and that's when I recognised more fully that really, I'd been engaged in unconscious meditation in those periods and getting out of my head and finding relief and peace.

I was thinking of all that and then trying to hear something more about what you were saying, because I knew that I wasn't getting as much as there was to get. What came through to me over these last two or three days was much more. In summary, I came to see, and the way I would express it was not that I am just in my body, but that I am my body, and that was deeply moving to me. I came to see that I am my body but not only my body, and something came very much alive about being in the body. After that I wasn't sitting in a corner feeling my body here and there but I had this greater sense that I am my body, but not only my body, and that has been very impactful and I feel it's only the beginnings of that impact, it only just started. So I just want to thank you for your repetitive, continued insistence on what you knew was the truth so that a little bit of the reality has come through to me and I have a sense of excitement about what may develop.

And if I could just share, because the words did come back into my head, at the end of all that, the words of the poet (TS Eliot) that many of you would be familiar with;

*"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."*

And I feel that I know a little bit of something about me and the body now, thank you.

Linda: Thanks K.

Question: I had a real crisis point yesterday. What happened for me at this retreat, first day, was my mind was all over the shop, as you said it would so I thought that's normal. Then day two and three it was getting more and more quiet, so I was very happy with that and I think it set some expectations that the rest would be more of it and going deeper. Possibly because of the expectation some thoughts came into my mind of waiting. Actually, I was waiting, not necessarily to get an experience, but a sense of going deeper, but the opposite happened. Wednesday I was

starting to have a lot of thoughts and I could not do a single sit without... I could not be aware of two breaths in a row. It became so bad yesterday morning that I could not even get one breath. It was just thought after thought after thought after thought – it was so relentless. By lunchtime I was really getting pissed off with myself and I thought, “I’m going absolutely nowhere, I’m making no progress whatsoever. This is such a waste of a good retreat. What am I doing here?” And the mind was going, “How long have you meditated again? How many years? Look how you’re failing.”

At the afternoon break I went on my bed and I was feeling so angry and so despondent I could not face... I tried to read a magazine actually to distract myself but as soon as I closed it I came back here to sit – it was, of course, doing nothing. I sat down with a very heavy heart and I felt so powerless. I thought, “I can’t do this again, I can’t continue like that.” So I invoked everyone I could think of: I invoked you and Buddha and Jesus and Gurumayi and Bhagwan and whoever was happy to come, I would welcome their help. And literally within a minute or two things settled and I thought, “Ah, finally I got the help I wanted.” I didn’t even actually realise I needed or wanted help until then. Only when I got so desperate did I ask for it. But what surprised me after that is the meditations were quieter but the thoughts were still there. However, what was gone is my reaction to them. There was no more anger, no more beating myself up. Instead there was a thought, then it would finish and I’d go to the breath and there was a flow, like going from one to the other with no fuss, like no ego in between.

So it felt like some major understanding because it was so in front of me how it is when I react to a thought as opposed to just a thought itself. It was such a big difference. And I realised also how hyper-critical I am of myself. I was expecting so much. This morning I thought, even that from the retreat is amazing, to realise the difference between reacting to thought and thoughts themselves, and also seeing how much I expect of myself. But today more dominoes have been falling down and I realised I’ve got this habit of seeing the glass half empty. So whatever I do is never enough. For example, when I do the walking meditation, I feel I should be aware of my feet but I should also be aware of my breathing, and maybe I should also be aware of the birds. There’s so much I am trying to pack into there that of course I am going to fail and there’s just no win.

Linda: The story of your life.

Question: It is, that’s right! That’s what I realised – this perfectionism, this high achiever story has actually been running my life. I’m so excited to see my life is going to maybe change from that. And it also crossed my mind that I’m going to go home, I’m going to look in my diary and go “Who’s been packing this diary with all of that? That’s crazy.” I realise I need to give myself some softness, some slack, and be human and flow more with things. I feel like I’m such a slave driver to myself. I feel so grateful that I came to this place to be with you, and receive this grace, essentially, to see that. So thank you.

Linda: Thanks. So just one thing about the walking. What I’ve been doing is not watching my breathing so much, but concentrating a bit more on my feet – being aware of my breath a bit, but more on the feet. And it’s particularly good in that room where the floor is cold and flat. You can feel every bit of your foot touching the ground. So don’t worry too much about the breath. You’re going to be hearing things but feel your feet when you’re walking.

Question: I just want to follow up on that discussion yesterday. Something that you said really triggered something for me, because you mentioned that there was a lot going on two years ago

with my radical surgery and work. And I think I mentioned as an aside, “Oh, my mother-in-law had a stroke and died.” When that happened, I really didn’t grieve for her. I really didn’t have a response because of everything that was happening then. Unlike other situations, I really got along well with my mother-in-law and she liked me and so we had a very good relationship. But I didn’t do any grieving. There was just nothing there because everything was going on.

So early this morning I started grieving for my mother-in-law, and all those emotions did come to the surface. It really did bubble up. At the time it seemed a bit strange for me that I just had that neutral response, given the relationship we had. That really came up and bubbled up this morning. And then a bit later on in the first sit that triggered something else, about my grandmother. My grandmother died when I was twelve years old. She was really the only grandparent that I knew, and was the first person I knew that had died. That was the first experience of death and I remember vividly after being told that she died, I walked into the lounge room and I was just by myself. I was more or less in a state of shock and that was the only response I really had at her death. Then this morning during the sit, just spontaneously, I started shedding tears for my grandmother who died almost fifty years ago. There must have been tears there back then but nothing came to the surface because I was still in shock at that death.

So I suppose what was happening yesterday – that business about work and being angry – I think that was just an entry point into all the things that have happened this morning, because this morning’s all been about death and my response to that death.

Linda: So you’ve spent the last thirty-five, forty years working, supporting your family, holding it all together. Now’s the time for you, and to make up for the grieving that you couldn’t do because you were too busy supporting everyone else. I remember when your mother-in-law died you were busy supporting W. and the whole family, and still working, and a couple of kids. So now is the start of your time and it’s a really important time. It’s great, really good. What else can I say? And thanks a lot for the Qi gong classes too, they’ve been really good.

Question: In the last couple of days I’ve had a lot of pain in my organs, particularly on my right side, really bad. I’ve had knee pain as well but this is the first retreat I’ve had it so bad.

Linda: Is it just when you’re sitting?

Question: Yes, it is. So I had a question around that because what I did was, the pain would be there and I would just notice it, and it would be there and it would be there and it would be there, and nothing was happening with it. I did a long sit this morning and I lifted my spine more – afterwards it had seemed like I’d slumped more – and I lifted my spine more and that in itself was a pain, because it required a real discipline just to keep this posture which relieved the pain. I was going to ask is that’s okay to do that because then the pain did subside and it’s not there now. But then you came along and did the touching, and put me down again and back. I felt like I was breaking my back going backwards. (laughter) But what I took away from that was, if this is how I need to sit at the moment – with the discipline I’d had when I’d raised my spine – I really haven’t been so firm with my body and posture, and say to the mind, “I’m going to be sitting now.”

Linda: So, yes, that’s good. I have felt that before – not a lot of pain – but occasionally I’ve felt if I’ve been slumping a little bit, I straighten up because it relieves the pressure because it can press down on things. So this is the first time that you’ve had it?

Question: I've had it about three days on and off. It was really bad this morning. I'd been sick since Tuesday and this morning it was really bad so I thought well, "This may be wrong but I've got to do something about it."

Linda: So straighten up. Really straighten up because when you are down a bit for long periods it is pressing on things.

So it's the same with you – you've retired from your job as retreat refreshment manager (laughing) and it might be partly that you're starting to feel things and have that space to be able to feel a few things that you can – not just relax into, but – soften into, and actually feel. So yes, do that, straighten up, experiment, and be very aware of your posture because it is important energetically.

Question: Yes, I didn't realise how important it was before. I think I was just getting to a point where I could be with the pain but relaxing too much.

Linda: Well for you, I think you do need to relax a bit more. And by relaxing I mean, not do so much. And I've given N. a suggestion for when you get home. (Laughing) I think it will be really good for you. So what you need to do is spend more time not doing anything: not doing work stuff, just sitting. It was so good to see you at the Qi gong this morning and classes like that.

Question: I would have gone yesterday but I was feeling too sick.

Linda: Yes, you were too sick, but I think you went the day before didn't you. So good, I was wondering how you were feeling. I was going to ask but then N. said you had been a bit unwell. And maybe that's partly just being able to let go a bit. You can sometimes feel a bit unwell when you stop trying to hold things together.

Question: I know when it happened, on Tuesday I did a long sit and I was up the front and I think just energetically...

Linda: (Laughing) A few people have been saying that: they sit at the front and that's the end.

Linda: How are you feeling B.? A bit better? You're both looking like you've got a bit more colour. When you first came in both you and J., looked so white and now you've got a bit more colour.

Question: You mean just this morning we looked white?

Linda: No, the first day.

Question: Oh, we had been in a white sort of place. ☺ I did think we'd emerged a bit. I don't think I had though. I think I'd just decided that I would just focus for this month, come what may. And people tended to irritate me with texts. Some friends would say, "Now really take care of yourself... Go and buy an ice cream." And I'd think, "Get out of here. What do you know? You're not up here where I am," but I could see a sort of helplessness. People wanted to be helpful. It was all the good intentions. And in a sense, I did put myself into a type of straightjacket to do it: to keep cooking, to keep cleaning, to keep J. comfortable, to prepare things, speak to doctors and people. I went into that full twenty-four-hour nursing mode. I remember saying to someone, "It's like looking after an

intelligent child. With each piece of food that would go inside him – it was like I was trying to do it. And he would say, “Just let it go.” Not always but often, and after a while I had to learn to let go taking care. And I thought, “That’s what mothers do when they’ve got a sick child.”

But yesterday I woke up, I was really exhausted and I knew I couldn’t keep going. I’d had a bladder infection for a few weeks and all the care and treatment I’d been receiving – and there was one piece of it I didn’t have which was antibiotics. But finally I decided yesterday morning, “Sometimes I’m okay but really I haven’t been able to take good care of myself at the retreat. So I’m just going to have to see a doctor today.” And it seemed awesome that here I am somewhere I don’t know where a doctor is or how you do that. I spoke to J. about it and the next thing he comes back and says, “It’s all sorted. You’ve got an appointment or they’re getting you an appointment...” I was so overwhelmed and grateful that that care was there and it was so immediate that when I was ready to let go, everything was in place, and I had never experienced that sort of tenderness. So I’ve let go. This morning I did let go, I almost fainted, but I think it was because I hadn’t had food and I’d taken the antibiotic. I felt a bit ill but I feel as though I’ve got more colour.

Linda: You do, you definitely... both of you do actually.

Question: And I also have let go of concerning myself with J., as though I know that he’s on his own path and he doesn’t need that sort of care anymore. I had given that up quite some time ago but... So yes, thank you, thank you to everyone who’s supported that, R. for driving me. So yes, a lot of gratitude.

Linda: I was so happy when you both said you were coming.

Question: Yes, I know it’s like how fortunate to meet you.